# MINORITY ADVANTAGE? AN EXPLORATION OF MINORITY PARTY STATUS AS A BENEFIT FOR IDEOLOGICAL EXTREMISTS

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ABSTRACT

Nathan E. Pinnell: Minority Advantage? An Exploration of Minority Party Status as a Benefit for Ideological Extremists
(Under the direction of Jason Roberts)

The benefits resulting from majority party status in the House are generally thought to be dichotomous, accruing to the members whose party is in control and absent for those whose party is not. However, anecdotal evidence has suggested that, on occasion, the strategic interests of the majority can align with the policy interests of what I term "ideological extremists", or members who are outside the norm of policy preferences in their party. In those circumstances, the majority party benefits from making the minority take divisive or embarrassing votes, while ideological extremists are better able to position take. To explore whether the anecdotal evidence is indicative of a larger trend, I collected data and ran empirical tests on over 6,000 amendments receiving roll call votes in the House from the 97th-113th Congresses. My results suggest that ideological extremists are able to position take more frequently and on a wider array of issues while in the minority, although they are still relatively profilic while in the majority. Moreover, I find that ideological extremists perform worse in elections after they have been in the minority, indicating that whatever benefits they may enjoy do not directly translate to electoral rewards.

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# INTRODUCTION

On July 14, 1993, Representative Phil Crane (R-IL) took to the floor of the House to argue for passage of his amendment to H.R. 2520, the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. His amendment, which would have cut the entirety of funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), was popular among the more conservative stalwarts his party, many of whom rose to argue that the NEA was a waste of taxpayer money and that art should be funded privately[1]. Despite their exhortations, the Democratic majority joined with roughly half of the Republican minority to vote against the amendment, which handily failed by a vote of 105-318. The scene was hardly a new one. In both the $101^{st}$ and $102^{nd}$ Congress, the same Crane amendment came up for a vote, invariably splitting the Republican minority on its way to being soundly defeated. Upon the Republican takeover in the $104^{th}$ Congress, though, it became conspicuously absent. In the decade of Republican majority control from the Republican Revolution of 1994 to Rep. Crane's general election loss in 2004, his amendment never came up for another recorded vote.

Over the course of this work, I will argue that the anecdote above is evidence of a larger trend in legislative behavior. Although there are definitive advantages for some members of the majority party in their ability to position take and achieve policy goals, these benefits are not divided evenly. Rather, members of the majority party who are closer to leadership ideologically or display greater party loyalty are more likely to reap the rewards of these benefits, while other members may find little relief in majority party status. Of particular interest in this work are those members who are ideologically distant from party leadership, which I term "ideological extremists". When ideological extremists are in the majority, party leadership should have the ability to control the agenda and keep the most contentious issues from receiving votes, while making concessions as necessary. Alternatively, when ideological extremists are in the minority, there should be some overlap between

[1]As Rep. Duke Cunningham (R-CA) put it, "...if the gentleman would get all of the liberal Members who are going to vote for this [bill] to give $1,000, like I did last week, he can pay for this amendment." Given that the amendment would have cut $175 million in funding for the NEA, he apparently overestimated the size of the liberal coalition.

their policy and position taking interests and the strategic interests of the majority, who benefit from the minority taking embarrassing votes. In combination, this indicates that ideological extremists should be disadvantaged by being in the majority party but benefitted by minority party status.

To provide evidence for this argument, I use amendments receiving roll call votes as a proxy for the ability of members to engage in position taking. Combining previously available data with an original data set of over 6,000 amendments in the House of Representatives from the $97^{th}$ Congress to the $113^{th}$ Congress, I show that ideological extremists are able to position take more frequently while in the minority party and propose more divisive amendments in doing so. My results on ideological extremists in the majority are mixed, but do provide evidence that they are disadvantaged relative to being in the minority, albeit not relative to other majority party members. Additionally, despite their increased ability to position take, ideological extremists tend to receive a smaller vote share in elections after they have been in the minority, indicating that they are not position taking solely for the purposes of electoral gain. This paper proceeds as follows: I first lay out a theory for why ideological extremists do not receive a similar share of benefits as their copartisans simply by virtue of majority status, nor suffer as many consequences when in the minority. I then outline my expectations for the types of amendments offered by ideological extremists in the minority and majority, before testing these hypotheses. I conclude by offering several avenues of future study.

## MAJORITY PARTY BENEFITS AND RECORDED VOTES

Being a member of the majority party in the House of Representatives is widely recognized to confer electoral and policy benefits. The majority party controls the agenda and Rules Committee, allowing them to determine what bills may come to the floor, the type of rule to be applied to the bill, and often what amendments may come up for a vote. In addition to control of the Rules Committee, the majority party also has more members on other standing committees, giving them the ability to reshape legislation before it is sent to the whole chamber. Particularly since committee reform beginning in the 1970s, chairmen of standing committees are usually beholden to their party leaders, ensuring that legislation is not sent to the floor without leadership approval (Wright, 2000). With this power comes concrete advantages: (Cox and Magar, 1999), for example, find that members of Congress who went from minority to majority status received about $36,000 more per member from business and trade PACs. In addition to financial rewards, Moore and Thomas (1991), among others, find that members of the majority party have greater legislative effectiveness than their counterparts in the minority, able to bring bills to the floor and get them passed at a much higher rate. Clearly, being in the majority party has its perks.

There is reason to think that not all members of the majority party are so lucky, though. As Smith, Roberts and Vander Wielen (2008) observe: "the Speaker may use scheduling to reward friends and punish enemies." More specifically, work by Hasecke and Mycoff (2007) has shown that members of Congress who display greater loyalty to their party by voting with leadership at a higher rate and contributing to the party's reelection efforts are more likely to get their bills heard on the floor and passed. The members of the majority party who benefit the most from their status are therefore most likely friends of the Speaker and loyal party members, while those who do not act as good soldiers will be less likely to notice the same advantages. In particular, one would expect that moderates, especially those who might defect on borderline votes, and ideological extremists, whose policy preferences might result in embarrassing splits in the party, would find themselves most disadvantaged.

Due to the benefits afforded the majority party at large and majority party leaders specifically, leadership undoubtedly wants to retain its status and pursues strategies to that end. For a significant portion of the $20^{th}$ century, Democrats did not have to worry about the security of their majority in the House, but by the 1980s the possibility was starting to crystallize that Republicans would make House elections contentious. The actions of Newt Gingrich and the Conservative Opportunity Society, which led to the Republican Revolution of 1994, helped ambitious politicians realize that there were advantages to non-cooperation and drawing sharp contrasts between the two parties (Roberts and Smith, 2003). Following the Republican takeover of the House, politicians who had witnessed firsthand the effectiveness of aggressive tactics in driving their party from an afterthought to the majority only redoubled their efforts.

One effective strategy for drawing contrasts between the parties is calling for recorded votes, particularly on amendments. As Roberts and Smith (2003) argue, roll call votes on amendments "force a choice between a bill and an alternative or perhaps between two alternatives to a bill." Because sponsors can target the language of their amendments to closely mirror their preferences and minimize policy concessions, this can lead to greater policy gradation than may be available in bills that make it to the floor. Amendments give legislators the chance to take a position on whether cutting the budget by 5% or 2.5% is preferable to the status quo, for example, making known their position on an issue with much greater specifity than a simple up-or-down vote. This can often lead to votes on amendments being highly divisive, and as Mayhew (1974) argued, makes amendments the ideal tool for the position-taking process.

Since the advent of electronic voting in the House in 1973, which greatly reduced the time it took to hold a recorded vote, House members and leadership have attempted to capitalize on the strategic opportunities this afforded them. For a time, roll call votes proved a particularly strong weapon for the minority party, due to the relatively low threshold for calling a recorded vote[2]. However, as Lynch, Madonna and Roberts (2016) find, the vast majority of bills in the House are considered under a structured rule, which restricts the type of amendments that can be proposed. Combined with the strong control of the Speaker and Rules Committee over what comes to the

[2]Under the rules of the House, any member or delegate may request a roll call vote, as long as that request is supported by $\frac{1}{5}$ of a quorum (44 members).

floor, this allows to majority to somewhat limit the effectiveness of recorded votes as a tool for the minority party.

In spite of this, there is still abundant evidence that many of the amendments which receive roll call votes are sponsored by the minority party. Egar (2016) found that between the $104^{th}$ and $111^{th}$ Congresses, 55% of amendments subject to a roll call vote were proposed by the minority. One possible resolution to this paradox is that, due to the usefulness of amendments as position-taking devices, the majority party uses their agenda control and gatekeeping power to elevate extreme minority amendments for strategic reasons. Lynch, Madonna and Roberts (2016) detail that "during the 111th Congress, Representative Paul Broun (R-GA) proposed four amendments to a continuing appropriations act: Amendment 30 cut it by .5%, Amendment 37 by 1%, Amendment 38 by 2.5%, and Amendment 39 by 5%. Majority-party Democrats allowed a vote on only the amendment proposing the 5% cut." They further determined that amendments sponsored by members of the minority party between the $109^{th}$ and $111^{th}$ Congresses frequently received floor consideration, but were rarely passed. This suggests that the majority party is allowing recorded votes on amendments sponsored by the minority party for strategic purposes, giving the majority party the opportunity to look unified or causing the minority party to look divided. Although majority party leadership has the ability to exercise negative agenda control, avoiding votes on issues that will divide the party, minority party leadership has little recourse to stop these divisive votes (Gailmard and Jenkins, 2007).

## AMENDMENTS AND MINORITY-PARTY EXTREMISTS

If the anecdotal evidence above is confirmation of a larger trend, wherein the majority party is allowing extreme amendments to come to the floor to split the minority party, one would expect this to be reflected in the divisiveness of the votes on those extreme amendments. To avoid selection on the dependent variable, I propose simply using all amendments sponsored by ideological extremists. While it is reasonable that not all amendments put forth by ideological extremists would expose divides in their party, it is likely that many of the most extreme amendments would be sponsored by the most ideologically extreme members of Congress. Moreover, when attempting to measure the effects of sponsoring extreme amendments, it is likely that ideological extremists would be more likely than other members to sponsor multiple extreme amendments, and therefore be more likely to reap the rewards or suffer the consequences of their actions.

If ideological extremists are the members sponsoring extreme amendments in the House, their fortunes should diverge based on whether they are in the minority or majority. When ideological extremists are in the minority, they are aided in their efforts by two factors. First, minority party leadership has very little power to influence or discourage members from putting forth amendments that will lead to embarrassing votes for the minority, given their lack of negative agenda control. Second, on extreme amendments, the strategic interests of the majority align with the policy interests of the ideological extremists in the minority, giving the majority leadership an incentive to allow those amendments to come to a recorded vote. In conjunction, these two factors lead to my first major hypothesis, which I am terming the **Minority Advantage Hypothesis**. The Minority Advantage Hypothesis can be divided into two subhypotheses:

- **H1a:** Ideological extremists in the minority sponsor more amendments than other members of the minority party.
- **H1b:** Amendments that are given a roll call vote and are sponsored by ideological extremists are more likely to result in divisive minority party votes than amendments sponsored by other members of the minority party.

Hypothesis 1a describes the most concrete advantage of being in the minority party for ideological extremists — their increased ability to position take through roll call votes on amendments. Through the combination of their amendments winning approval from majority party leadership and the inability of the minority party leadership to do anything to stop it, ideological extremists are able to make their positions known to their constituents at a higher rate than other members of the minority party. If support is found for H1a, this would indicate that ideological extremists in the minority are sponsoring more amendments which the majority party is eager to see come to a vote, and thereby have an advantage over their copartisans in their ability to position take.

Hypothesis 1b is a reflection of another, but less direct, benefit enjoyed by ideological extremists in the minority. While in the majority ideological extremists may see their position taking on certain issues curtailed by a leadership intent on not allowing embarrassing or divisive votes, the same restraint does not exist in the minority; as such, ideological extremists in the minority are able to make their opinions known on a wider array of issues. This reduced restraint manifests in an increased number of votes coming to the floor which are divisive to the minority party. If H1b is supported, this would be additional evidence that ideological extremists are the ones putting forth extreme amendments, indicating that actions which are to the benefit of ideological extremists in the minority nevertheless have negative consequences for the rest of the minority party.

Ideological extremists should not only be benefitted by being in the minority, but also face more obstacles while in the majority party. Negative agenda control by leadership, the lack of which so benefits ideological extremists in the minority, combined with policy preferences outside the norm should result in a reduction of influence upon gaining majority status. This leads to my next hypothesis, the **Majority Disadvantage Hypothesis**, which can also be divided into two subhypotheses:

- **H2a:** Ideological extremists in the majority sponsor fewer amendments than other members of the majority party.
- **H2b:** Amendments sponsored by ideological extremists in the majority result in no more divisive majority party votes than all other amendments put forth by the majority party.

Because the policy preferences of ideological extremists are outside the norm for their party, the same elements that made their amendments a favorite of majority party leadership when they in the

minority should work against them when they gain majority status. The negative agenda control of the majority suddenly becomes a clear check on their ability to position take, and holding votes on their divisive amendments is no longer in the strategic interests of majority party leadership. If support is found for H2a, this would provide the strongest evidence that ideological extremists are actually disadvantaged by being in the majority, prevented from holding votes on their amendments by a leadership intent on avoiding embarrassing votes.

For H2b, as with H2a, the negative agenda control that is not a factor in the minority is now quite influential on their actions in the majority. In exercising their power, majority leadership can selectively choose to allow amendments they know will be less divisive or less likely to embarrass their party, and should apply this power equally for all members; because ideological extremists are more likely to put forth the most divisive amendments, they should be disproportionately affected by this. As a result, their amendments which actually receive a recorded vote should ultimately appear rather similar to those put forth by other members of the majority party. Further, if H2b is supported, this would indicate that ideological extremists in the majority have less ability to express their true policy preferences, due to what is effectively censorship by leadership.

Together, the Majority Disadvantage Hypothesis and Minority Advantage Hypothesis suggest that ideological extremists are benefitted by the suffering of their copartisans and somewhat restricted when their party is in power. This suggests that ideological extremists have a different cost-benefit analysis than other members of the House, and leads to my third and final hypothesis:

- **H3:** Extremists in the House of Representatives will perform better, electorally, in subsequent elections after they have been in the minority party.

Because position taking is one of the key reelection tactics described by Mayhew (1974) and ideological extremists are better able to position take while in the minority, it seems reasonable that the reelection prospects of ideological extremists would be higher after having been in the minority. Although there is some reason to doubt that taking extreme positions on issues is helpful to reelection prospects, with work such as Canes-Wrone, Brady and Cogan (2002) finding members of Congress who were more ideologically extreme suffered a decrease in vote share, ideological extremists ultimately would have little incentive to engage in such behavior if it did not provide them some positive benefit. Additionally, as Carson and Williamson (2017) find, members of Congress

who are ideologically extreme can actually have an increased probability of reelection, provided that they hail from an ideologically extreme district. If support is found for Hypothesis 3, there would be evidence that the relationship between ideological extremists in the minority and majority party leadership is best described as symbiotic, with each benefitting themselves to the detriment of the rest of the minority party.

## MEASURING IDEOLOGICAL EXTREMISTS AND DIVISIVENESS

To test these hypotheses, I utilize three main sources of data. The first is information about all roll call votes and members of Congress from Voteview.com (Lewis et al., 2018). From this data, I selected all roll call votes on amendments in the House from the $97^{th}$ Congress to the $113^{th}$ Congress. While the data available from Voteview records the underlying bill which the amendment is modifying, it does not provide any information about the sponsor of the amendment itself. To obtain that information, I read through the Congressional Record and hand-coded the sponsor of each amendment; this resulted in a total of 6,619 amendments spanning a period of 33 years. To get important control variables on the sponsors of amendments and electoral performance, I used data from Jacobson (2015), merging it with my amendments dataset where necessary. The resulting data set represents the most complete collection of roll call votes on amendments and their sponsors in the literature to this date.

To operationalize the concept of ideological extremist, I used NOMINATE scores, also available on the Voteview website (Lewis et al., 2018). For each Congress, I first determined the size of both parties in the House, then ordered the members ideologically according to their first dimension NOMINATE scores. For each party in each Congress, I denoted the 10% most ideologically extreme members as ideological extremists, and the rest of the members as ideological nonextremists. From the $97^{th}$ Congress to the $113^{th}$ Congress, this translates to 554 total observations denoted as ideological extremists, of which 134 are different individuals. There are also 5699 observations denoted as nonextremists, of which 1126 are different individuals. The fact that there have been less than 1,300 different Representatives over a 30 year period is a direct testament to the power of the incumbency advantage.

It is important to note that I only use the term ideological extremist to represent the most conservative Republicans and liberal Democrats, and do not include any members who might be labelled moderates. Although the policy preferences of moderates would typically be outside the norm for their party as well, I do not include moderates as ideological extremists because they are

more likely be prime electoral targets for both parties and therefore would be less likely to be aided in position taking by majority party leadership. Admittedly, my measure of ideological extremist is imperfect, given that members who were once classified as such may be relegated to the role of nonextremists due to an influx of more extreme members or a decrease in party size. However, in both of those cases, one would expect that the former ideological extremist would actually get closer to the median party ideology, possibly resulting in less of a need for bomb-throwing tactics.

One important aspect of amendments sponsored by ideological extremists is their proclivity for provoking divisive votes. To measure the divisiveness of a vote, I first use data from Voteview to determine the total number of Republicans and Democrats who vote for, against, and present on each amendment. I then compute the proportions of those who voted for and against an amendment divided by the total number who voted on that amendment for each party, taking the highest value of the two as a party unity score. Using this party unity score, I coded a vote on an amendment as a divisive majority vote if less than 75% of the majority party voted the same way on that amendment, and as a divisive minority vote if less than 75% of the minority party voted the same way. It is therefore possible for a vote on an amendment to be simultaneously divisive to both the majority and minority party, although this was relatively uncommon[3].

Figure 1, below, is informative in showing that majority party leadership is seemingly better at controlling the minority party than they are at restricting the wings of their own party. While around half of the amendments sponsored by the minority party which received a roll call vote split the majority party in the $97^{th}$ Congress, that percentage had sunk to single digits by the $113^{th}$ Congress. Extremists in the majority consistently sponsor a high percentage of amendments divisive to the majority party, despite a brief dip during Democratic control of the $110^{th}$ and $111^{th}$ Congress. Inversely, as shown in Figure 2, majority extremists are the least likely group to propose amendments that divide the minority party. Minority party extremists, however, are consistently the group most likely to sponsor amendments resulting in divisive minority party votes.

[3]Out of the 6,619 amendments in the data set, only 398 (6%) divided both the majority and minority party.

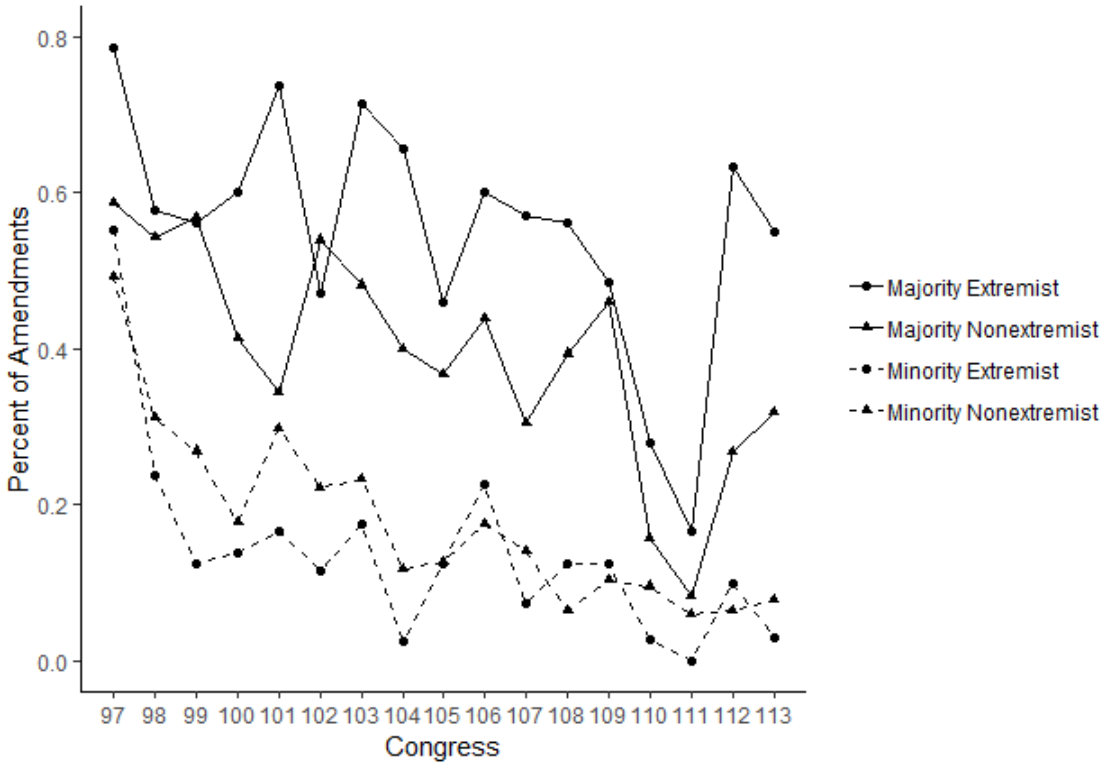


Figure 1: Percent of Amendments Causing Divisive Majority Party Votes

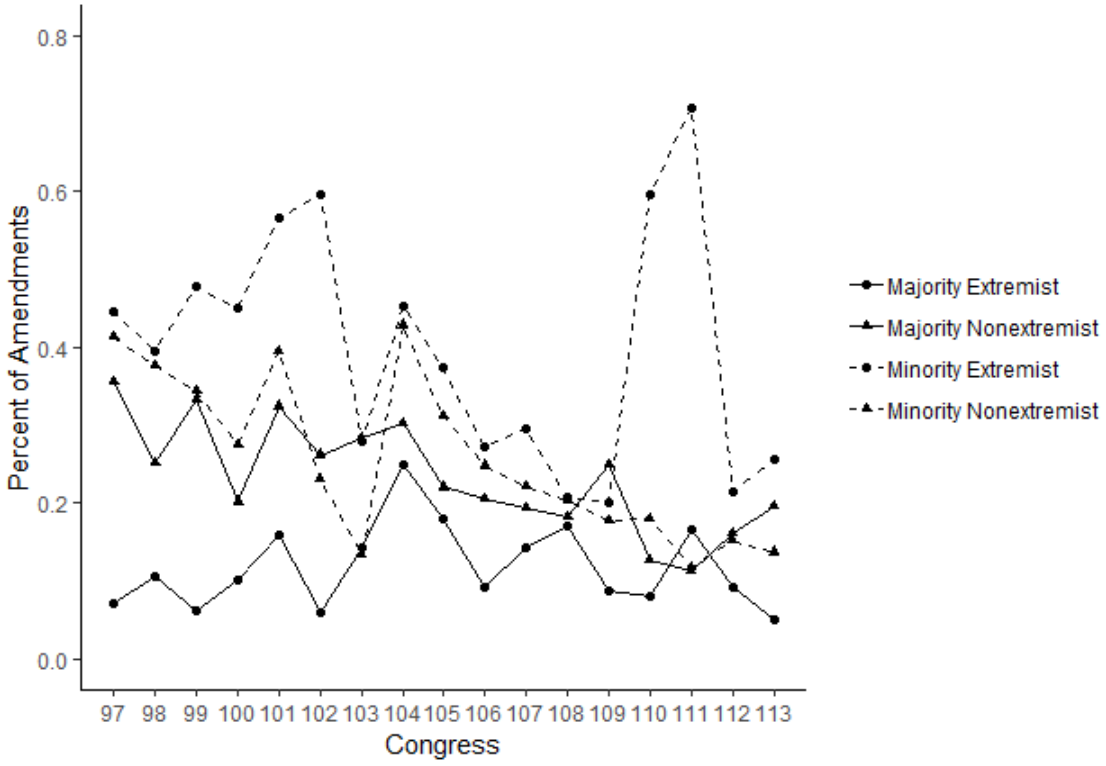


Figure 2: Percent of Amendments Causing Divisive Minority Party Votes

## MINORITY ADVANTAGE AND MAJORITY DISADVANTAGE?

Figures 1 and 2 make clear that there is a relationship between extremists and sponsorship of amendments leading to divisive votes. Extremists in both the majority and minority parties are sponsoring amendments which divide their parties, but are the types and numbers of amendments they sponsor substantively different than amendments put forth by nonextremists? Table 1, below, displays descriptive statistics regarding the average party unity and passage rates of amendments sponsored by extremists and nonextremists in the majority and minority parties. Although the minority party sponsors more amendments overall than the majority party, the passage rate of their amendments are less than half that of the majority; this trend is most pronounced for minority party extremists, who see their amendments pass a mere 18% of the time. Also of note is that the party unity scores on amendments sponsored by ideological extremists in the majority are roughly the inverse of the scores for the ideological extremists in the minority, providing potential evidence that majority party status is not as much of a disadvantage as was hypothesized.

Table 1: Party Unity and Passage Rate by Group

| | Majority Overall | Majority Extremists | Majority Nonextremists |
|---|---|---|---|
| Majority Party Unity | 0.79 | 0.74 | 0.80 |
| Minority Party Unity | 0.86 | 0.91 | 0.85 |
| Passage Rate | 0.52 | 0.31 | 0.57 |
| Num. Amendments | 2985 | 586 | 2399 |
| | Minority Overall | Minority Extremists | Minority Nonextremists |
| Majority Party Unity | 0.88 | 0.91 | 0.87 |
| Minority Party Unity | 0.81 | 0.77 | 0.83 |
| Passage Rate | 0.23 | 0.18 | 0.24 |
| Num. Amendments | 3634 | 879 | 2755 |

Turning our attention now to the Minority Advantage Hypothesis, subhypothesis H1a stated that ideological extremists in the minority are able to put forth more amendments than their non-ideologically extreme copartisans. To test this hypothesis, I performed a two-sample T test with an alternative hypothesis that the mean number of amendments sponsored by ideological extremists in the minority is greater than the mean number of amendments sponsored by minority

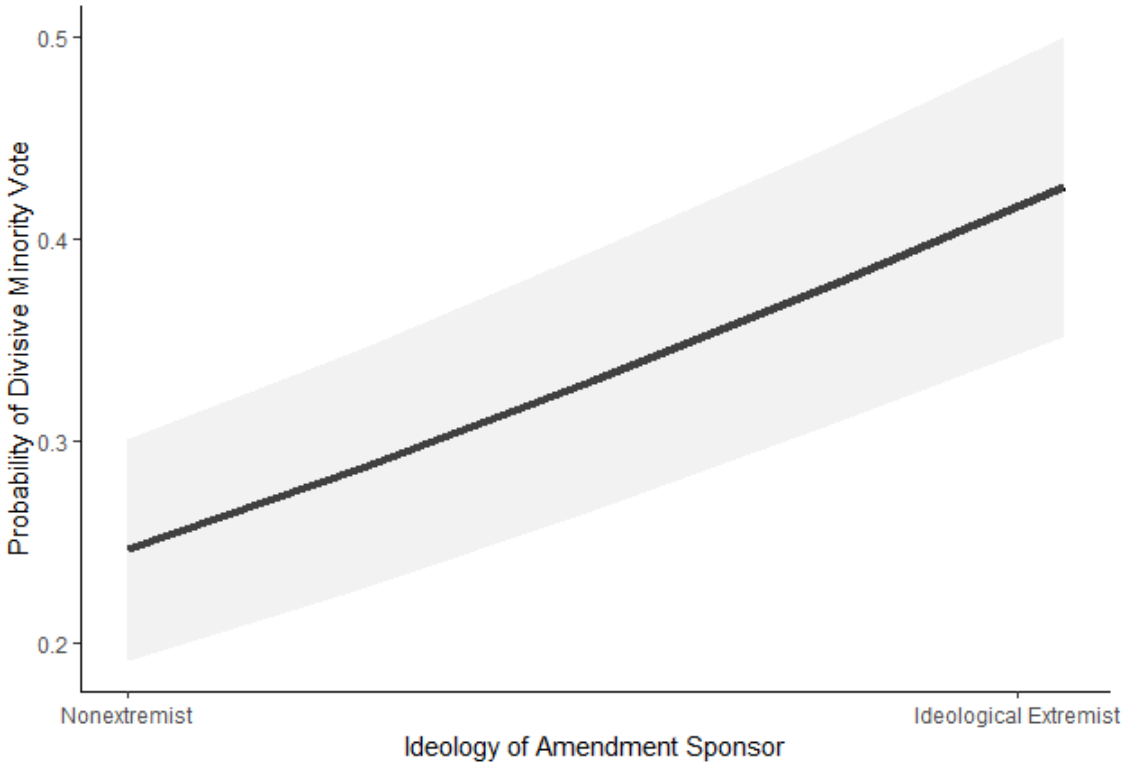


Figure 3: Probability of Amendments Causing Divisive Minority Party Votes

party nonextremists. The results are striking — although ideological extremists sponsor 10.72 amendments per member over the 33 year time period, the rest of the minority party sponsors just 3.68 amendments per member, a statistically significant difference ($p = .00009$) at any reasonable level of confidence. This is reasonable evidence to conclude that one benefit of minority party status for ideological extremists is greater leeway to engage in position taking.

Ideological extremists are therefore seeing more of their amendments come up for a vote, but the question now becomes whether their amendments are more divisive than those put forth by other minority party members. H2a argues that they should be, due to majority party leadership having less in the way of negative agenda control. To test this hypothesis, I ran a logistic regression on all amendments put forth by the minority party which predicted a divisive minority party vote as a factor of whether the sponsor was an ideological extremist or not. In keeping with the literature, I included sponsor-level controls for gender, committee or subcommittee chair status, and seniority, as well as a fixed effect by Congress. Figure 3, above, gives a predicted probability plot of the impact

of ideological extremity on amendment divisiveness, while the full results of the regression can be found in Table 4 of the appendix.

Figure 3 shows that having an ideological extremist as the sponsor of a minority-party amendment significantly ($p < .000001$) increases the probability of a divisive vote. While the 90% confidence interval is large, there is still evidence to suggest that H1b is correct and ideological extremists propose amendments that are generally more divisive than the rest of their party. In sum, it appears that ideological extremists in the minority sponsor more divisive and higher numbers of amendments than their nonextremist peers, providing support for the Minority Advantage hypothesis as a whole.

Moving from the minority to the majority, the Majority Disadvantage Hypothesis asserts that it is not just that ideological extremists are advantaged while in the minority, but also that they face impediments to position taking when in the majority party. H2a asserts that one way this manifests is in restricting the number of amendments proposed by ideological extremists relative to their non-extreme copartisans. To test this hypothesis, I ran a two-sample T test with the alternative hypothesis that the mean number of amendments sponsored by ideological extremists in the majority is less than the mean number of amendments sponsored by minority party extremists. The result is nonsignificant and the relationship appears to be reverse what was hypothesized; indeed, majority party extremists sponsor more amendments than their copartisans on average[4], although ideological extremists sponsor significantly fewer ($p = .0055$) amendments while in the majority party.

Ideological extremists are therefore less constrained than was expected in how often they are able to position take, but it is still possible that they find themselves constricted in other ways while in the majority. Specifically, H2b asserts that majority party leadership, replete with negative agenda control, should not allow ideological extremists to put forth divisive amendments that will split their party, and the amendments that come to a vote should be very similar to those put forth by the rest of their party as a result. To explore this hypothesis, I ran a logistic regression predicting whether majority party amendments caused a divisive majority vote on the basis of whether the sponsor was an ideological extremist. I again included sponsor controls for gender, committee chair status, subcommittee chair status, seniority, and a fixed effect by Congress. Table 2, below, gives the results of this regression, with the fixed effect by year suppressed.

[4]Ideological extremists in the majority party sponsor an average of 5.58 amendments per member, while nonextremists in the majority party sponsor only 2.69.

Rather than the null result that was expected, Table 2 clearly shows that ideological extremists in the majority are more likely than nonextremists to put forth amendments that split the majority party. In combination with the trends shown earlier in Figure 1, these results suggest that there may be some relation between the heterogeneity of parties and the likelihood of their extremists to put forth amendments that split their party. Because of the low threshold for calling a recorded vote on an amendment, a small group of majority party extremists may be able to force divisive or unpopular votes to the detriment of the rest of their party. One need look no further than the Freedom Caucus and the trials of John Boehner and Paul Ryan to see an example of a tenacious minority of a majority causing problems for the leadership[5].

Table 2: Divisive Majority Vote as a function of Ideological Extremity

| | *Dependent variable:* |
|---|---|
| | Divisive Majority Vote |
| Ideological Extremist | $0.633^{***}$ |
| | (0.118) |
| Female | $-0.182$ |
| | (0.183) |
| Committee Chair | $-0.058$ |
| | (0.155) |
| Subcommittee Chair | $0.209^{**}$ |
| | (0.102) |
| Seniority | $-0.079^{***}$ |
| | (0.015) |
| Constant | $0.853^{***}$ |
| | (0.219) |
| Observations | 2,182 |
| Log Likelihood | $-1{,}399.694$ |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 2,843.389 |
| *Note:* | $^{*}$p<0.1; $^{**}$p<0.05; $^{***}$p<0.01 |

[5]The Freedom Caucus currently has around three dozen members, although at one time were reported to number in the 40s. As such, it is highly likely that they could have met the threshold necessary to force votes on divisive amendments.

Thus, there is significant support for the Minority Advantage Hypothesis but, at best, mixed support for the Majority Disadvantage Hypothesis. It does not appear that ideological extremists in the majority are disadvantaged relative to their copartisans, although they are certainly disadvantaged relative to their abilities when in the minority party. A central motivating question in this work is why extremists engage in this behavior — specifically, do they reap electoral benefits for their increased ability to position take when in the minority? To answer this question, I ran two regressions predicting vote share as a function of being in the minority in the previous Congress, one for extremists and one for nonextremists. I included controls in each regression for incumbent spending, opponent spending, presidential vote share in the district, gender, committee and subcommitttee chair status, and a fixed effect by Congress. To normalize the data, I log transformed both spending variables and subtracted the national presidential vote share from the presidential vote in each district. The results of these regressions are in Table 3, below, with the fixed effects by Congress again suppressed.

H3 does not find much support in Table 3. Both extremists and nonextremists perform worse following minority status, although extremists are seemingly more disadvantaged than their nonextreme counterparts. The further differences between the two models are quite thought-provoking, with incumbent spending, gender, and committee chair status being significant for nonextremists but not for extremists. Additionally, in the case of gender, the large coefficient for extremists relative to nonextremists provides some evidence that women who are ideologically extreme may be benefitted by it for some reason, although the effect is not significant ($p = .11$). Admittedly, these differences may also be due to the fewer number of observations for extremists than nonextremists. Table 3 does, however, indicate that whatever advantages ideological extremists may have in increased ability to position take while in the minority party are not directly translating into electoral benefits for those members.

Table 3: Vote Share as a function of Previous Minority Status

| | *Dependent variable:* | |
|---|---|---|
| | Vote Share | |
| | Extremists | Nonextremists |
| Previous Minority Status | $-1.855^{***}$ | $-1.589^{***}$ |
| | (0.662) | (0.194) |
| Log(Incumbent Spending) | $-0.469$ | $-0.975^{***}$ |
| | (0.422) | (0.142) |
| Log(Opponent Spending) | $-0.550^{***}$ | $-0.887^{***}$ |
| | (0.077) | (0.028) |
| Presidential Vote Share | $0.556^{***}$ | $0.398^{***}$ |
| | (0.028) | (0.011) |
| Female | 1.570 | $0.852^{***}$ |
| | (0.989) | (0.316) |
| Committee Chair | 0.065 | $0.785^{*}$ |
| | (0.948) | (0.411) |
| Subcommittee Chair | $-0.559$ | 0.338 |
| | (0.617) | (0.217) |
| Seniority | $-0.004$ | $-0.001$ |
| | (0.077) | (0.027) |
| Constant | $71.403^{***}$ | $83.650^{***}$ |
| | (5.097) | (1.695) |
| Observations | 421 | 3,881 |
| $R^2$ | 0.736 | 0.526 |
| Adjusted $R^2$ | 0.720 | 0.523 |
| Residual Std. Error | 5.524 (df = 396) | 5.885 (df = 3856) |
| F Statistic | $46.071^{***}$ (df = 24; 396) | $178.536^{***}$ (df = 24; 3856) |
| *Note:* | | $^{*}$p<0.1; $^{**}$p<0.05; $^{***}$p<0.01 |

## DISCUSSION AND FUTURE ANALYSIS

Ideological extremists are advantaged by being out of the majority, but this does not appear to directly translate to any electoral benefits for those members following their time in the minority. Further, while ideological extremists are somewhat constrained in the majority, they still fare better than their copartisans in position taking opportunities. Ideological extremists sponsor a significantly larger share of amendments and also put forth amendments leading to more divisive votes than the rest of their party, behaviors which persist regardless of majority status. The Minority Advantage Hypothesis is therefore the only hypothesis for which support was found.

Clearly, more research will be needed to fully explain why ideological extremists in the minority choose to sponsor amendments which cause divisive minority votes. It is possible that there is simply a disconnect between their actions and the consequences of those actions, where those members feel they are being benefitted by position taking in ways that are not actually improving their electoral fortunes. However, as Mayhew (1974) argued, members of Congress are "single-minded seekers of reelection," making it unlikely that they are engaging in activities without expecting some discrete benefit. It is alternatively likely that they could be using the position taking opportunities available to them in ways that are electorally helpful but do not necessarily translate into increased vote share, such as increasing financial contributions. I believe exploring the impact of previous minority status among ideological extremists on fundraising totals offers a promising future direction for research.

I would also like to further refine my definition of ideological extremists and verify that my definition is appropriately quantified. As the thresholds for ideological extremity and a divisive vote were inherently arbitrary, chosen without any theoretical underpinnings, it would be helpful to have my results cross validated with other sources of data. One method for doing this would be to use other measures of ideology, such as cf scores available in the Database on Ideology, Money in Politics and Elections (Bonica, 2014), to rerun my regressions and determine if similar results are found. Another possibility would be to recalculate the item response models behind NOMINATE

scores, removing all votes on amendments, in an effort to reduce possible endogeneity. I would hope that both of these methods would provide similar results to those found in this work.

I will conclude with the mention of several questions that I feel are prompted by this work. Although my main focus was the behavior of political elites, I believe it is also important to explore the impact that rules on underlying bills may have in shaping those behaviors. Is it the case that structured rules are leading to fewer amendments causing divisive majority votes, and that most divisive amendments are only arising on the few bills which have open rules? If so, why have we not seen a decrease in divisive majority-party amendments corresponding with the increase in use of structured rules? Moreover, how does the homogeneity or heterogeneity of a party affect the type and divisiveness of the amendments being offered? These are all questions which I feel that future iterations of this project would do well to answer.

# APPENDIX

Table 4: Impact of Ideological Extremism in Minority on Divisive Minority Votes

| | *Dependent variable:* |
|---|---|
| | Divisive Minority Vote |
| Ideological Extremist | $0.889^{***}$ |
| | (0.097) |
| Female | $-0.656^{***}$ |
| | (0.148) |
| Committee Chair | $1.702^{**}$ |
| | (0.856) |
| Subcommittee Chair | $1.055^{*}$ |
| | (0.606) |
| Seniority | $-0.077^{***}$ |
| | (0.012) |
| Constant | $-0.138$ |
| | (0.249) |
| Observations | 2,907 |
| Log Likelihood | $-1{,}603.092$ |
| Akaike Inf. Crit. | 3,250.184 |
| *Note:* | $^{*}$p<0.1; $^{**}$p<0.05; $^{***}$p<0.01 |
| *Fixed effect by Congress suppressed* | |

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